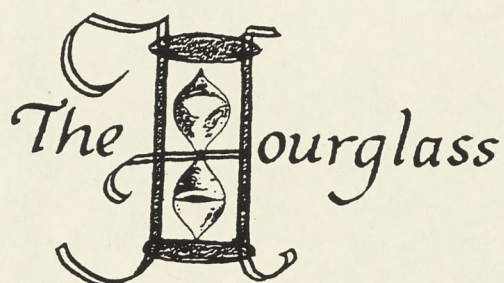


Historical Society of Palm Desert

P.O. Box 77

Palm Desert, CA 92261

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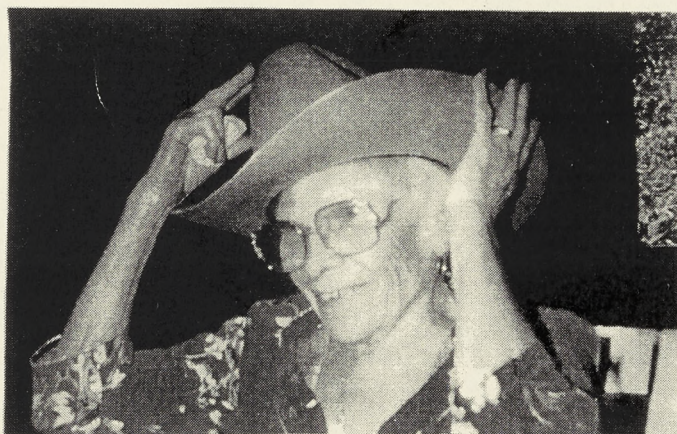
Archives

WINTER

VOL. 9, NO. 4

BERNICE LOFLAND Palm Desert's First Librarian

This unique lady claims she was born on January 30, 1900 on the steps of the court house in Galveston, Texas. Later she moved to Brownsville, Texas where at age 15 she worked in her cousin's book bindery. In 1921 she went to San Francisco and received additional training as a bookbinder.



Much of her life after that seems to center around Los Angeles. Fred Lofland was a rare book dealer there, his store being located at 732-734 6th Street. Bernice tells of double-dating with Howard Hughes; and she also knew Dorothy Parker, the writer. She had met some of the movie stars of the 1930s and 1940s.

Fred and Bernice married in 1934, and she set up her bindery in the space above his store. Here she had interesting clients and challenging work. She bound books in many different kinds of leather, and once she was asked to bind a book in human skin.

Like others who live in the Los Angeles area, the Loflands enjoyed visits to the desert. Bernice loved everything about the desert rocks, cactus, sand and mountains. In 1946 they decided to move permanently to the Coachella Valley and built a Spanish-style adobe wrapped around a center courtyard. It was located on Route 86 (old 99) in Thermal. She sent to the government for instructions on "How To Make Adobe Bricks." So with the help of immigrants from Mexico they constructed a two-bedroom home. The kitchen cabinets were truly a do-it-yourself project. "I was a bookbinder," she said, "but nobody ever told me I couldn't build cabinets."

Two acquaintances were also involved in the Lofland's construction project. One was "Old Harry Oliver" whom she had met in Hollywood, where he was employed designing sets for the movies. He knew about how to make adobe bricks and he designed their living room. The other person was Richard Sanford from Texas. While he was visiting the Loflands, he built a "town car" right there on the property and then drove it to Mexico.

In addition to the big house on the Thermal property, they also built a smaller one-bedroom place. It was located closer to Highway 86 and was used as a rental at times, and at others it became Bernice's antique shop. This smaller house was rented by a family during a four-year period. The youngest, an 8-year-old boy, describes Mrs. Lofland. She was short and small of frame, with skin that reminded you of tanned leather. Her thick-lensed glasses were maneuvered into place with two or three quick flips of her upper lip and her cheek muscles.

Though told not to go near Mrs. Lofland's "white castle" only 500 feet away, the young boy's curiosity about the house and its interesting occupant was piqued. The two finally met at the country store half a mile down the road. When asked what he was doing there, he told Bernice that he was turning in bottles for the refund so as to earn money to buy a bike. Then she turned all business-like and mentioned odd jobs that needed to be done at her place. Thus began a time of mentoring during lunches and rest breaks.

The relationship between the two nurtured the boy in lessons he will never forget. He was exposed to music and the arts, cooking, how to indulge in "afternoon tea" with the pinky properly extended, to carry on a conversation and really listen to others. Then there was domestic work, digging open trash pits, cutting grass and weeding as well as any gardener. Also, the importance of commitment, keeping one's word, planning, making lists, and completing projects. The time Bernice took with the child could have changed the odds of how his life might turn out.

After Fred died in 1959, Bernice lived in an apartment on San Pablo in Palm Desert. Across the street were apartments, which were later turned into a seminary, and is now Fitzhenry Funeral Home.

Bernice never admitted to being a trained librarian, but she was wonderful at the job and was considered a rare book authority. Besides working at the Indio Library, she often spoke of the "little library" on Frontage Road which was the precursor of the one on Portola. The staff from the Riverside Library came to make plans for the new building, where Bernice took over as head librarian. Jane Kuener, whose husband was the director for the Foundation for the Retarded, worked at the library as a part-time employee. By 1969 they needed more help and so Harriett Oberhaus was hired and stayed until 1976. Because of a mutual love of Indian lore, Harriett and Bernice became friends and the children's department benefited from Harriett's talent for telling Indian stories which she eventually did on Channel 10 television.

Cyria Henderson and her husband Randall, editor of Desert Magazine, were good friends of Bernice. The Hendersons were instrumental in getting the new library established. Through them Bernice met Margo Ernst, a young woman assistant editor of Desert Magazine. Margo remembers Bernice as a "wonderful person" and they remained friends until Bernice's death. When Mrs. Lofland retired from the Palm Desert Library in 1969 she was given the title, "First Lady of Letters of the Desert."

By 1976 she lived in a mobile home park on Portola. At that time she had a little yellow car which she drove to Los Angeles to visit friends and her brother, who lived there. One place she frequented was Dawson's Book Shop in Larchmont, where she had

worked at one time. Sometimes she and Jessie Conroy and other friends would drive to Mexicali to shop. It was a sad day when her eye-sight failed and she could no longer drive, which she had been doing since the age of 15.

In 1981 Bernice Lofland married Richard Sanford; yes, it was the friend from Texas who came to help them with their Thermal home and built a town car. They moved to an apartment on Shadow Mountain Drive in Palm Desert. Both of them enjoyed cruises and so they traveled for the four years they had together before Richard died in 1985. Bernice moved again to another apartment west of the previous one, which remained her home until her death.

Gifted with a great sense of humor, she loved to tell jokes and was delightful company. Bernice was a person of many talents who loved doing things with her hands. She seemed to be able to do almost anything she set her mind to do. She was devoted to the C.O.D. Friends of the Library, and tripled their sale profits because of her knowledge of rare books and first editions. As a seamstress she sewed for herself and others; she once made and sold hats to Robinsons in Los Angeles; she was also a jewelry maker and craft designer. Oriental painting and calligraphy were other hobbies she enjoyed.

Bernice Lofland left the company of her friends on August 30, 1987. The end of her knowledge, creativity and help was a loss to many of the local organizations which had honored her over the years.

The Historical Society is indebted to Millie Bird, Doug York and Harriet Oberhaus, who shared their knowledge of the life and personality of Bernice Lofland Sanford with us.

IN LOVING MEMORY



Theda Simpson Lundquist, J.D. ----- 1919 - 2001

On Sept. 21 we lost one of our most active members. Her ready wit and infectious smile brings her to our minds often and deepens the sense of loss. Her contribution as editor of the "Hourglass" can't be duplicated. In the valley Theda founded the Friends of the C.O.D. Library and the Visiting Nurse's Association. For years she worked with the Girl Scouts of America at both the troop and council levels. An exhibit to Theda's memory is now on display at the Society.

Mary Nudd

Marian Meredith

L. Carolyn Fisher

Edwin Lundquist

Dr. & Mrs. Joseph Lesser
Dr. & Mrs. Harold Bird
Dan & BJ Callahan
Dick & Ginny Folkers
Jean Ernst

Memorial Gifts

Bill Phillips
Joyce White

Theda Lundquist

Jean Hollenbeck
Laura McCandless
Jean Ernst
Dr. & Mrs. Joseph Lesser
Dan & BJ Callahan
Dick & Ginny Folkers

NEW MEMBERS

Supporting

Jerry & Sheila Gilligan

Individual and Family

Jacque C. Becker

Gloria Derchan

Hazel Brown Emerick

Eugene & Manon Heck

William & Paula Kroonen

George & Nelsha Kryder

Loretta Riley

Gerald Salomon

2001 Membership Dues

Have you paid your's yet? They were due on April 1, 2001. Mail your check to:

Historical Society of Palm Desert

P. O. Box 77

Palm Desert, CA 92261

Individual.....\$15	Family.....\$20
Supporting...over \$20	Contributing....\$100
Patron.....\$250	Life.....\$1000
Business/Organizations.....	
1st year.....\$75	Renewal.....\$50

New Membership Booklet

We are working on a new membership roster. If you have had any change in your address or phone number lately, please call 346-6588 and give us the corrections before we publish the booklet.

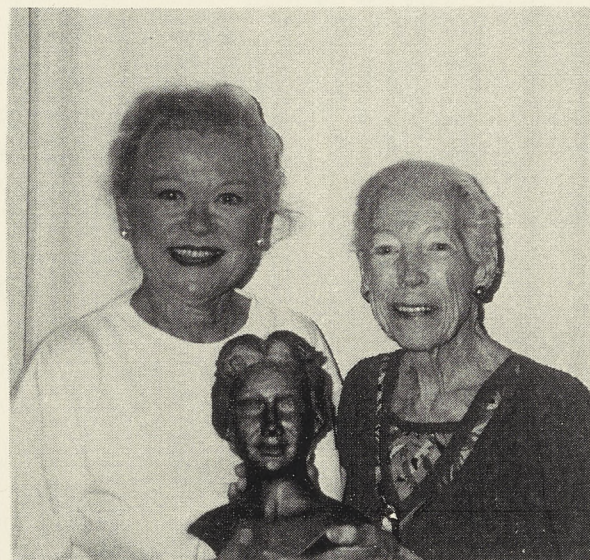
Would you like to volunteer in 2002?

We are reorganizing our volunteer program. You have special talents we can use in a large variety of tasks that need to be done. Our goal is to fit you into the right slot so that you will enjoy the time you spend at the Society. Maybe you already know how you can best help us. Jean Ernst is chairing this committee. Please call her at 346-0041.

Wanted: Paintings by pioneer artists
Copies of Palm Springs Villager
Copies of Oliver's Desert Rat Scrap Book
Glass display cases

Collection Donations

Jean Ernst.....	paper & exhibit items
Millie Bird.....	paper & exhibit items
Dan Callahan.....	aerial photos
Char Whitaker.....	Girl Scout photo
Bill & Hazel O'Neil.....	antique organ
Dick Folkers.....	paper & exhibit items
Marty McKell.....	scrapbook & photos



GINNY FOLKERS receives the donation of the Cyria Henderson sculpture "Mystery Pioneer Lady" from Theda Simpson Lundquist in July 2001.

Second Annual

Ed Mullins Picnic in the Park

We have reserved the main pavilion in Civic Center Park again for this year's event. Dan Callahan has agreed to chair it, and he will need some volunteers to help him. March will be here before we know it, so call the office (346-6588) and ask Helen to put your name on the picnic list.

This party is for members, their families and guests. It's a bring-your-own-food and we will provide the dessert and coffee type event. It is great fun and fellowship !!!

Wisdom for Today

*It's pretty hard to tell what does bring
happiness; poverty and wealth
have both failed.*

Society Activity Schedule 2001-2002

Dec. 8.....Eisenhower Medical Center
30th Anniversary Celebration
Jan. 16.....Chamber Mixer
Mar. 3.....Ed Mullins Picnic in the Park
Apr. 24.....Spring Luncheon
May 15.....Founder's Day
Oct. 23.....Fall Luncheon
Oct. 26.....Fire House Yard Sale

Start Saving for Our Yard Sale

In September we had so much fun putting on the Fire House Yard Sale, we decided to have another on Oct. 26, 2002. One month later will be better because it won't be so hot and more of the snowbirds will be back. The plan is to start collecting in February, so start putting saleable items aside for us. If you need to get rid of something now, call the office and let us know. If you know the original cost or value of an article, please tag it with that info. This will assist us in the pricing.

Fire Memories, Inc.

Did you know there is a collection of old fire-fighting equipment and memorabilia right here in Coachella Valley? Robert Green, a retired fireman, has a museum. He loves showing it to people of all ages. He can be reached at 360-0118.

Blueprints for Your Home

When the Palm Desert Property Owners Association was dissolved the Society inherited all their blueprints. It is important that a set of blueprints be kept with a house so as to avoid expensive architects' fees for remodels or additions. Also plumbing and electrical lines can be more easily located when problems come up. If you receive a postcard saying we have located your house plans, please respond promptly because this offer is good only for a limited time. This project is a fund-raiser, so a \$20 donation for full house plans is requested.

Roger Keezer Resigns

Our stalwart Vice-President who spent almost every Monday at the historic fire house has resigned. He and his wife, Maria, have built a new house in Yucca Valley. Roger was in charge of our audio-visual department and the photo archives. Also he was the keeper of Engine No. 1. We found out after he left just how much he was doing. He was at the Golf Cart Parade, and we hope that he and Maria will attend the Spring Luncheon.

Hal Rover: Vice-President
2001 Volunteer of the Year

Do You Remember?

We met a man who found a large wooden sign in an empty lot bordering on Candlewood Street. The sign reads "Sports Corral." He says that years ago people would come and park their campers on the land and one area was designated for playing various kinds of sports. This was news to your curator, I never heard of it. If you know that there was such a place and/or can shed more light on its existence, please call the office and leave a message for Ginny. Your input is appreciated.

Oral Archives

We are becoming more aware every day that we are losing knowledge of the history of Palm Desert. This precious treasure lies in the minds and hearts of our pioneer citizens who lived through those early, formative years. If you or any of your friends would be interested in taping a session with us about various aspects of the history of this area, please let us know. Don't be afraid that you will run out of things to say, because we can set it up in a question and answer format. Call 346-6588 and tell Helen you have information for the oral archives and we will set up a convenient appointment.

Pioneer Voices from the Past
DESERT AIR HOTEL

by Del Davitt

Back then I was in charge of CBS radio in Hollywood, my favorite hobby was piloting a plane. One day I was out flying on my way from Van Nuys Airport to Phoenix when I saw a little airport. I looked at my charts, but I couldn't quite figure out where it was. Palm Springs Airport was easy to pick out, and I knew I had already passed it, but I didn't think I had gone quite as far as Thermal Airport. So I said to myself, "Well, I'll go down and investigate." It turned out to be Desert Air Park, now a thing of the past. That day I met some lovely people. Quite a few of them were local people and this seemed to be their favorite hangout. This small airport was known as a "drive-in or fly-in." From then on I never did get to Phoenix. It seems that every weekend I'd head for Desert Air Hotel. First thing you know, I became I guess what they call a "desert rat" fell in love with the desert!

CALEB E. COOK

(by his son)

Our family came to the valley on February 13, 1913 to Avenue 50 south of Indio. My father filed on a desert claim of 160 acres, now Cook Street & Hwy. 111 in Indian Wells. He leveled about 10 acres, put down a well, and began building a house which wasn't finished when we moved there in 1917. A few seedling dates proved that we had water and could grow things. After the witnesses came out to see our crop, the rats ate up all that was left (chuckle.) My father was employed as president and general manager of the Deglet Noor Date Growers Association in Indio until his death. When the trees were small he planted cotton between them, and during World War I it was castor beans. The Cook Ranch was a show place and everybody who drove through the area would stop. We hosted many visitors, because my father had lots of friends in southern California.

Happy Holidays! Ginny Folkers, editor

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